



Department of Justice

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Southern District of Alabama

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FORMER SCHOOL PRINCIPAL STEVE THOMAS PLEADS GUILTY **TO POSSESSING AND DISTRIBUTING CHILD PORNOGRAPHY**

Prosecution is Part of Project Safe Childhood

MOBILE, AL—Former Stapleton School Principal Steve Thomas entered a guilty plea today. He pled to a two-count indictment charging him with distribution and possession of child pornography and has agreed to forfeiture of his computer, United States Attorney Deborah J. Rhodes announced.

“Child pornography records the actual sexual abuse of a child. Those who possess and trade these images further victimize these children and increase the market for this horrendous material,” said Rhodes. “We will aggressively enforce the federal laws to protect the youngest and most vulnerable members of our society.”

Based upon these charges, Thomas faces a maximum sentence of 20 years imprisonment, a fine of \$250,000, and a lifetime of supervised release following his incarceration. The Government will seek all applicable sentencing enhancements and will recommend a sentence at the high end of the sentencing range under the Sentencing Guidelines.

This case is the result of a cooperative effort between federal and local law enforcement. Thomas came to the attention of law enforcement while Lt. Renee Graham of the Mobile Police Department was investigating another related case

against Ben Boone. Boone admitted that he had been trading images of child pornography and that he had internet “chats” with an individual who was identified as Steve Thomas. These “chats” included not only trading images of children, but also discussions about kidnaping and raping children. Lt. Graham provided this information to Special Agent Paul Roche with the FBI. They worked together to identify Steve Thomas. Both cases were referred for federal prosecution. Ben Boone was subsequently sentenced to 210 months imprisonment and a lifetime of supervised release following his incarceration.

“Unfortunately, the internet has become a tool for predators to trade child pornography and to hunt for new victims. Disturbing evidence shows a strong correlation between those who engage in child pornography and those who actually molest children. We will be working closely with our state and local law enforcement partners to take child predators off the streets for as long as possible.” stated Rhodes.

This case is part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide Department of Justice initiative which is based upon partnership among federal, state and local law enforcement, child advocacy groups and community organizations to prevent child exploitation and to prosecute offenders.